

The Senior CHIT★CHAT

Winter 2009



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia

SENIORS PREPARE FOR PRECINCT2GETHER Holiday Production

Ready to enjoy some true holiday spirit? Then mark Dec. 11 on your calendar for the Precinct2gether production of "Precinct2ville," an adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." The production was written by Bobbie Yarbrough and will include a cast of more than 50 actors, singers and dancers and the efforts of numerous behind-the-scenes volunteers.

"The theme of this year's production is, 'seniors feeling good about aging,'" explained Yarbrough who is a community center aide at the Barrett Station and Riley Chambers Community Center. "I'd noticed that some seniors were always a little down about getting older so I wanted to write a script that would lift their spirits. This is a fun script that includes elements from 'A Christmas Carol' and 'The Grinch.'"

Putting together a show of this size can be quite an undertaking. There were auditions for the major characters and a talented crew has been working on the sets for months. Yarbrough also feels lucky to have the assistance of Gene Smith to work



with her on the production this year. "We are on our way to a really successful production as everyone is learning their lines, cues, entrances and exits," said Yarbrough. "Our seniors are so amazing and I love to see the excitement in their eyes. They never let the energy go down. I've often told my seniors they are just full of fire!"

Yarbrough has been writing and producing shows with the seniors at the Barrett Community Center for about five years. "You can never imagine the joy I feel when watching our seniors learn, perform and work on our shows," said Yarbrough. "We had to cancel our precinct-wide holiday production last year because of Hurricane Ike but we're on track for a great performance for this holiday season."

"Precinct2ville" will be shown at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 11, in the main performance hall of the Lee College Performing Arts Center in Baytown. A free ticket is required to attend a performance. Please contact your area senior program coordinator regarding ticket availability.



Check out what's inside...

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Mark Your Calendar

Following are some events for seniors taking place during December, January and February. If the event is hosted at one of Harris County Precinct Two's community centers, the center's name follows the activity. An * indicates this event is not at a Precinct Two community center:

DECEMBER

Dec. 7 South Channel Joint Council Meeting, EHCAC

Dec. 8 Winter Party, San Jacinto

Dec. 11 Precinct2ville—Holiday Celebration, Lee College Performing Arts Center*

Dec. 15 Gospel Night, Grayson

Dec. 16 Winter Party, Flukinger

Dec. 17 Christmas Birthday Luncheon, Barrett

Dec. 18 Christmas Birthday Party, Walker

Dec. 18 Hometown Opry—Christmas Show, EHCAC

JANUARY

Jan. 4 South Channel Council Meetings, Bay Area and EHCAC

Jan. 8 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Jan. 11 Healthy Living Class, North East

Jan. 12 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Jan. 15 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Jan. 19 Gospel Night, Grayson

Jan. 21 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Jan. 22 AARP Defensive Driving, North East

Jan. 28 Precinct-wide Domino Tournament, Grayson/Baldree Building

Jan. 29 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

FEBRUARY

Feb. 1 South Channel Council Meetings, Bay Area and EHCAC

Feb. 1-5 Black History Programs, Barrett

Feb. 3 Black History Speaker, North East

Feb. 3 North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger

Feb. 4 Valentine Party, Grayson

Feb. 4 Gospel Night, Flukinger

Feb. 5 Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

Monthly Birthday Celebrations

Second Tuesday: San Jacinto

Third Thursday: Barrett

Last Wednesday: Flukinger, Grayson, North East

Feb. 7 Super Bowl Party, EHCAC

Feb. 9 Gospel Night, San Jacinto

Feb. 10 Inner City's Valentine Party, EHCAC

Feb. 11 Valentine Luncheon, North East

Feb. 12 Valentine Party, Barrett

Feb. 12 Valentine Party and Birthday Celebrations, Walker

Feb. 15 Swing Thing Fund Raiser Golf Tournament, Timber Creek Golf Course*

Feb. 16 Ballroom Valentine Dance, Bay Area

Feb. 16 Gospel Night, Grayson

Feb. 17 Sweetheart Banquet, Flukinger

Feb. 17 Mardi Gras Party, North East

Feb. 18 Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

Feb. 18 Valentine Party, San Jacinto

Feb. 19 Lunch & A Movie, EHCAC

Feb. 26 Hometown Opry, EHCAC

Feb. 27 Rodeo Parade, Downtown Houston* (call area coordinator/limited tickets)



Chit-Chat info:

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Community Center Dances:

Proceeds benefit Precinct2gether, Inc.:

Second Thursday: Grayson

Third Tuesday: Bay Area (ballroom dancing)

Third Thursday: East Harris County (EHCAC) (country-and-western dancing)

Fourth Friday: San Jacinto - no charge to attend (Pick 'N Grin Band)

A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner *Sylvia R. Garcia*

Happy Holidays!

We've survived another summer – one without a hurricane – and we are approaching yet another New Year.

In this issue of the Chit-Chat, you will find an article on the annual Precinct-2gether holiday production and one about our first community garden at the North East Community Center. Both stories relate to health. Read the article on the holiday production and you'll see how vibrant and active our Precinct2gether seniors are – models of activity being an integral part of a healthy lifestyle.

The article on our new community garden not only includes activity but also maintaining a healthy, balanced diet.

I don't know about you but this is

beginning to make me think about my New Year's resolutions. I hope each of you will join me in making 2010 a year of good health.

Let's work together to remain active and pursue healthy diets. Our senior groups in Precinct2gether truly energize me. I am counting on you to continue doing this as we move into 2010.

The New Year is going to be a fun and interesting year that will include the 2010 Census. When you take the time to fill out your Census forms next March, I want you all to do so in a state of good health!

Together – in Precinct2gether – we will make 2010 the best year it can possibly be!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvia R. Garcia".

GUESTS ENJOY THE ANNUAL *Black-and-White Ball*



Chuck Radney, current president of the North Shore Rotary, and Carolyn Mulloy, widow of Mark Mulloy, accept the Jim Fonteno Service-to-Seniors Award.

On Sept. 11, more than 300 supporters and friends of Precinct2gether gathered at the Bay Area Community Center for the sixth annual Black-and-White Ball. This event is one of the signature fund raisers for Precinct-2gether. This elegant evening included a catered dinner, live auction, a band and dancing.

One of the highlights of the evening was the awarding of the Jim Fonteno Service-to-Seniors Award presented to North Shore Rotary and its former president Mark Mulloy by Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia. Mulloy was very involved with the North Shore community and an ardent supporter of Precinct-2gether. He recently passed away and Precinct2gether decided it was a fitting tribute to honor his work and the involvement of the Rotary as a whole for many years.

Precinct2gether would like to thank everyone who generously supported the annual Black-and-White Ball.

Things to Know

Precinct2gether continues food basket tradition

Every year, Precinct2gether staff and volunteers spend a day creating food baskets and delivering them to needy seniors. In October, more than 300 baskets were filled and delivered throughout the Precinct. Precinct2gether thanks our sponsors, volunteers, transportation and senior program staff who helped us fill the pantries of many seniors.



And the winner is...

On Oct. 9, residents from the Precinct Two nursing homes, family and friends gathered at the East Harris County Activity Center for the first Precinct2gether Royal Pageant. For the past 15 years, the pageant was named, "Ms. Golden Years" for ladies in one of the nursing homes but in 2009, the event was renamed and opened to men and women.

Sixteen ladies and 10 gentlemen representing 18 nursing homes participated in the Royal Pageant. Congratulations to Patsy Harris of The Pointe Nursing Home and Ray Jones of the Paramount Nursing Home who were named queen and king of the Royal Pageant. Precinct2gether also wants to recognize all the truly wonderful contestants who joined us in this program.

Softball leagues looking for players

The Bay Area Senior Softball Association (BASSA) encourages all senior softball players to join the league in 2010. BASSA plays at the Kipper Mease Sports Complex, 10700 Red Bluff Blvd. There are two age groups for teams with one being for players between 50 and 65 years old and the other for those over 65 years. There is a small fee for each player that covers uniforms and umpire fees. For more information, call 281.488.3353.

Baytown Area Senior Softball has a spring and fall season for two leagues. The "B" league plays in the mornings and is primarily for older or less skilled players. The "A" league has its games in the early evenings. Players 50 and older are encouraged to call 281.424.1230 for information or check the league's Web site at www.baytownseniorsoftball.org.



Seen a Non-working Streetlight?

If you spot a non-working streetlight, contact CenterPoint Energy to make sure they know of the problem. To report a streetlight outage, call 713.207.2222 or go online to www.centerpointenergy.com/services/electricity/residential/reportastreetlightoutage. You must have the pole number in order to report a non-functioning light.

We're off to the links

Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia is hosting the annual Swing Thing golf tournament on Monday, Feb. 15, 2010, at the Timber Creek Golf Course in Friendswood. All proceeds from this tournament benefit Precinct2gether. For more information on playing in the tournament or being a sponsor, call 281.452.7598 or e-mail fundraising@precinct2gether.org.

Are you ready for some football?

The Super Bowl is always more fun if you're watching with friends. Come join Precinct2gether at the East Harris County Activity Center on Feb. 7, 2010, for our annual Super Bowl Party. The party kicks off at 4 p.m. and the game will be shown on a big screen. There's no charge to attend nor reservations needed. Soft drinks will be provided but please bring a snack to share.



Annual Domino/"42" Tournament Set for Jan. 28

A day of friendly competition will be had by all participating in the annual Precinct2gether Domino/"42" tournament which will take place on Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Grayson Center's Baldree Building, 13828 Corpus Christi, Houston, Texas 77015.

For more information or to register, call the North Channel coordinator at 281.452.7598, South Channel coordinator at 281.479.4232 or the Inner City coordinator at 713.514.0185. Participants must pre-register for this tournament.

PRECINCT2GETHER JOINS COMMUNITY GARDEN MOVEMENT

Is there anything that tastes better than freshly picked fruits and vegetables from a garden? For years, growing produce mostly was found on farms or in home gardens. Over the past decade, however, the number of community gardens have grown enormously throughout Texas and the United States, and Precinct2gether now is taking part in its own healthy, fun garden.

The American Community Garden Association broadly defines a community garden as “any piece of land gardened by a group of people.” The benefits of community gardening are numerous including community development, producing nutritious food, conserving resources, beautifying neighborhoods and the environment, stimulating social interaction and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education.

Precinct Two is home to a community garden situated at the North East Community Center that was developed as part of the ACHIEVE Health Initiative. ACHIEVE stands for Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change. The program initially was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a partnership between the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and the YMCA of the USA to support local efforts in advancing community leadership in the nation’s efforts to prevent chronic disease and related risk factors. When the program launched, 127 communities applied for initial funding and Harris County was one of the first 10 selected.

“The Garden is a true team effort from beginning to end,” explained Sharon Carter, LCSW, social worker for Precinct2gether. “I represent Harris County Precinct Two as a member of the Community Health Action Response Team for ACHIEVE. For our garden, Precinct Two supplied the land and the labor and ACHIEVE, whose members included the YMCA, HCPHES

and other local government entities, supplied a \$5,000 grant to help build the new garden.”

Having a community garden in Precinct Two has been a long-term goal of Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia. “The Commissioner really wanted a community garden as there are so many benefits that can lead to a healthier, happier population,” said Carter. “Our community garden is the first one that the ACHIEVE initiative has been involved with. We feel that our garden has planted the ‘community garden seed,’ which will hopefully grow throughout the Precinct.”

Let’s get planting

The seniors who attend the North East Center are an enthusiastic group who enjoy new projects. When Lisa May, center director, approached the seniors during some initial meetings about planting a community garden, the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

“Our seniors have been so involved with the garden from the start,” said May. “So far, we’ve planted onions, tomatoes, carrots, beets, cilantro, rosemary, beans and several kinds of greens. The seniors are very happy with this project and are really looking forward to a good harvest!”

Shelly Cooper, Precinct Two special programs coordinator, has had an active coordination role in the North East Center’s community garden and sees how this project is a catalyst for bringing the entire community together. “The garden is a great way to bring together seniors and youth through a healthy environment,” said Cooper. “By working together to provide fruits and vegetables for each other, we’ve created something that will be a benefit to all.”



Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia (left) admires the new community garden.



Millie Jenkins

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE KEEPS HER GOING

During the past 81 years, being active has been a constant in Millie McCall Jenkins' life. A native of Flatonia, Texas, Millie graduated valedictorian of her high school class and completed her studies at Draughon's Business College in San Antonio. While working for a thoracic surgeon, she met the love of her life, Tom Jenkins, who she later married and has been with for 60 years.

The Jenkins became parents to seven children during their marriage and spent many of their early years moving with Tom's job. While living in Kingsville, Millie began playing bridge which became a lifelong addiction. She also became an active volunteer while in Kingsville, serving as a Campfire group leader and as team mother for her sons' baseball teams.

In 1968, the family made a final relocation to Dickinson where Millie landed a job as the secretary to the assistant superintendent for curriculum of the Dickinson Independent School District. Millie also became an active volunteer in the Dickinson community. After retirement, Millie joined H2U for seniors involved with Clear Lake Regional Medical Center, the Sunshine Club, Carmelites and AARP. She became a regular at the East Harris County Activity Center and the Bay Area Community Center where she enjoyed various programs and day trips. Through her involvement with Precinct2gether, Millie

met some of her best friends.

Three years ago, Millie suffered a stroke. Fortunately for Millie and Tom, after Millie returned home, their daughter, Martha, relocated from Austin to stay with them and she has lived with the couple ever since. "It's been wonderful having Martha here as we would have had to move into a nursing home without her," said Millie. "She really takes care of me and drives us around which has saved our lives and let us keep going."

Because of Martha's help, Millie is able to participate in the Women's Club and several other activities at Shrine of the True Cross and volunteer at the Grand Opera House and at the schools of music at both Rice University and the University of Houston. Millie also enjoys participating in programs at the Bay Area Center and attending many senior club meetings. "We really spend a lot of time at the Bay Area Center and are grateful for all the opportunities we have there," explained Millie.

In November, Millie, Tom and their family took a cruise together to celebrate the couple's 60th anniversary. "Our children and grandchildren are the love and joy of our lives," said Millie. The family also is able to share their lives with their beloved dachshunds, Max and Carl.



Board Games Popular Activity at Community Centers



Something as simple as enjoying a game of checkers may have a positive impact on brain health. According to a study published in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology, people who engage in activities that exercise the brain, such as playing card games, may delay the rapid memory loss that occurs if they develop dementia. Another study conducted at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that seniors who had a variety of leisure activities including board games had a reduced risk of dementia.

Positively impacting neurological health is definitely a benefit of playing games but for the countless seniors who play games such as bridge, dominos, SkipBo and bingo at the Precinct Two community centers, having fun and socializing with other seniors is the goal of each game!

At the Flukinger Community Center, seniors have the chance to play in organized games on a regular basis such as bridge, bunco and bingo as well as trying the Center's new Wii. Informal table games also occur almost every day. "The ladies in our ceramic room play SkipBo or Mexican Train almost every day after lunch, explained Toni Drews, director of the Flukinger Community Center. "We also have many

seniors who stay after our Wednesday senior meeting and lunch to play games."

At the J.D. Walker Community Center, you'll find a game of dominos occurring almost every day with both organized games and those that start on the spur of the moment. Seniors at the San Jacinto Community Center can join in on scheduled games on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays while pick-up games of dominos, 88, Mexican Train, SkipBo and bridge are played on a regular basis. On almost any day, you'll find seniors at the Grayson and Barrett Station Centers seeing who will be the winner at dominos, SkipBo, 42 and 88.

Dominos and 42 are a daily activity at the North East Center with organized play from 8 a.m. to noon. Train also is a regularly enjoyed game on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Precinct2gether's Annual Domino/"42" Tournament, set for Jan. 28, 2010, is a great way to make playing table games part of your New Year's resolutions.





A True Passion for Working with Nursing Home Residents

The Chit-Chat's featured employee: Freda Morris

It has been said that if you love what you do, you've found the perfect job. For Freda Morris, director of the Precinct Two Nursing Home Program, the more than 11 years she has spent working to make the lives of every nursing home resident just a little better has been the best job she has ever had.

Morris' journey to Precinct Two began at Beaumont's Lamar University. "I already had earned a two year certificate in medical office skills and had decided to study for an activity director certificate," remembered Morris. "One of my instructors learned of an opening with the Precinct Two Nursing Home Program and she told me I had just the right heart for the job. I'm so thankful that God put me in her path to learn about this job. I came and interviewed for the job, was hired and have loved every moment ever since."

The Nursing Home Program works with 22 nursing homes in Precinct Two with the smallest home having 55 residents and the largest more than 200 residents. "We plan outings, crafts, parties, movies, visits to the theater, in-room visits and just about anything else that keeps our nursing home residents active," said Morris. "We're trying to keep the residents feeling like other seniors who are able to live in their own homes."

A major part of Morris' job is to be an "extra pair of hands" for each of the homes' activity directors. "We recently hosted our



annual luncheon for the activity directors," said Morris. "It's the one day a year they are able to get away from their jobs and be treated to something really special. They give of themselves all year and it's our turn to give back to them."

While Morris has accomplished a tremendous deal during her years with the Nursing Home Program, developing the "Adopt-a-Resident" program is one project she is extremely proud of. "I started the Adopt-A-Resident program because I met resident after resident who told me they had no family left or no one would come and see them at the holidays. This program makes sure our nursing home residents are not forgotten during the holidays."

During her time away from work, you'll most likely find Freda with her husband fishing or riding their Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Morris also enjoys spending time with her two sons and daughter, her three stepchildren and 10 grandchildren.

While everyone enjoys a break from the office, Morris is one of those lucky people who looks forward to her job every day. "What I truly enjoy most is my interaction with the residents," explained Morris. "They bless me more than I could ever bless them. If I can make them laugh or smile, that's the best thing in the world. I simply can't imagine a job where I don't interact with nursing home residents."

Useful Resources on the Web

Following are some Web sites that provide information or services that may be useful to you:

Harris County

<http://www.co.harris.tx.us/>

Learn more about the numerous offices, department & services provided by Harris County at this Web site. The site includes a useful A-Z listing of services and a directory of county departments.

American Dental Association—Oral Health Topics

<http://www.ada.org/public/topics/alpha.asp>

This Web site provides information on many oral health topics related to you and your family's oral health care.

Urban Harvest

<http://www.urbanharvest.org>

Urban Harvest is a local charitable organization that supports urban gardens, farms and orchards that inspire people to grow food in the city. This Web site includes gardening advice, resources and organic gardening classes.

Report a Litterer

<http://dontmesswithtexas.org/report-a-litterer.php>

If you see someone litter on Texas highways, you can turn them in through the Texas Department of Transportation's Report a Litterer program. The litterer will receive a litterbag and note reminding them not to mess with Texas. All submissions are strictly confidential and the litterer will not be able to find out who submitted his or her name.

Cool Globes

<http://www.coolglobes.com/houston.php>

Houston's Discovery Green is hosting "Cool Globes: Hot Ideas for a Cooler Planet." This free public art exhibit features 50 super-sized Cool Globes that each convey a different message about what ordinary citizens can do to combat global warming. The five-foot diameter, seven-foot-tall globes will be decorated by local, national and international artists and are on display until Dec. 31.



Precinct2gether, Inc.
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Houston, TX 77015

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Precinct2gether serves Harris County
Precinct Two seniors in Barrett Station,
Baytown, Channelview, Clear Lake,
Crosby, Deer Park, El Lago, Galena Park,
Highlands, Houston, Jacinto City, La Porte,
McNair, Morgan's Point, Nassau Bay,
North Shore, Pasadena, Seabrook,
Sheldon, Shore Acres, South Houston,
Taylor Lake Village and Webster.

*Precinct2gether, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3)
non-profit organization.*



★ DIRECTORY ★

Department of Community Centers & Senior Programming

Precinct2gether Main Office
281-862-9531

Precinct2gether TDD
713-755-8919

Department of Community
Centers & Senior
Programming
713-455-4869

Inner City Program
713-514-0185

North Channel Program
281-452-7598

Nursing Home Program
281-479-7199

South Channel Program
281-479-4232

Barrett Station & Chambers
Community Centers
281-328-4713

Bay Area
Community Center
281-326-2955

East Harris County
Activity Center
281-479-4232

Grayson Community Center
713-455-3660

North East
Community Center
281-442-7950

Ramsey & Flukinger
Community Center
281-457-1810

San Jacinto & Highlands
Community Centers
281-426-7561

Walker Community Center
281-426-3551

**Harris County Precinct Two
Transportation Department**
281-452-6071

Voucher Transportation
281-326-6013

Veterans Services
281-426-2832 or
281-843-2019